

# Nitrogen Stewardship

## CASE STUDY

Michigan farmer Myron Ortner of Tuscola County is a leader in nutrient management and soil health. He has partnered with Michigan State University to test strategies to improve nutrient management on a 40-acre plot of land where he grows corn and soybeans. Ortner was chosen, in part, based on his commitment to innovation and meticulous recordkeeping.

“I wanted an accurate picture of what was happening on my farm, and now we’ve got good scientific data established,” Ortner said. “It’s been a good learning experience. I’ve committed one of my fields to this project, and I’m hoping to be a part of it for a while.”

As a result of the project, Ortner was able to reduce his N rate by 15 percent without any loss of yield, leading to a first-of-its-kind credit from the American Carbon Registry. “It’s not so much the carbon credits and the profit there, but the opportunity to use less fertilizer and save on input costs,” Ortner said. “I was up at the 180 to 200 pounds (of fertilizer) level, and I voluntarily went down to about 160 on my farms. I learned from it.”

Ortner is participating in the Delta Nitrogen Credit Program, which will pay qualified Corn Belt corn farmers who reduce their documented nitrogen rates. The program began as an NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant.



Nitrogen application in a contoured, no-tilled field. Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS.